

- I. Welcome Governor's Office of Community Service *(Jan Lombardi)*
 - a. Thank you to the Commissioners serving on the Grant Review Workgroup!
 - b. Commissioners Present: James Steele, Doug Braun, Jackie Girard, Kim Miske, Adam Vauthier, Bob Harris
 - c. Staff Present: Jan Lombardi, Rebecca Steele, Tony Dean, Jim Auer, Julia Gustafson
 - d. Guests Present: Tim McCauley (Outside Reviewer), Sid Armstrong (Consultant), Tracy Scott (Montana Campus Corps)
- II. Commissioner Reflection *(Adam Vauthier)*
 - a. Competitive Grant Review Workgroup Process
 - i. It 10 hours to read and review the Competitive applications in November
 - ii. Doing Grant Review is the biggest way to make an impact on AmeriCorps in Montana
- III. Staff Expectations of Commissioners *(Julia Gustafson)*
 - a. Time Commitment
 - i. Application Review
 1. Reading the applications will be the largest time commitment in the review process. This will be the last two weeks in May, so please plan for it.
 - ii. Interviews
 1. The in person interviews of the selected applicants will be May 25-26 in Helena. We anticipate that it will take two days, but if we do not have large number of applicants, it might only be the 25th.
 - iii. Consensus on Funding Recommendations
 1. During this interview time on the 25-26, the grant review workgroup will also come to a consensus on the funding recommendations. This is what is presented to the full commission.
 - iv. Full Commission Meeting (video)
 1. The full commission meeting to approve the funding recommendations will be June 10th. We will be using a interactive video service again.
 - b. Communication Expectations
 - i. During this process, please let staff know if you have questions, if you don't receive your binder, etc. Please do not communicate with the applicants. Any questions should come to staff.

IV. Review and Update on Funding Process

(Rebecca Steele)

a. Funding Stream (Competitive vs. Formula)

- i. Formula – Funds granted to state commissions and subgranted to AmeriCorps programs operating in that state. Applicants compete in the spring at the state level for formula funds. The state commission is responsible for oversight of grant funds.
- ii. Competitive – Funds distributed by CNCS. If a program operates in a single state the state commission will be the grantee and the AmeriCorps program will be the subgrantee, in this situation oversight is performed by the state commission. Applicants compete in the fall at the national level for competitive funds. For program operating in more than one state CNCS grants funds directly to the program and provides oversight.

b. Timeline and Process

i. RFP & Application Instructions – February 23

1. For the formula funding cycle OCS blended the CNCS Notice of Funding Opportunity with the Request for Proposal (RFP) due to the number of date and scoring changes
2. RFP has been updated to include a description of the scoring process for the Staff Assessment. The Staff Assessment was added to give the Grant Review Committee more information on an applicant's operating history based on the Letter of Intent, Readiness Self-Assessment Survey, monthly desk audits (PER's), in person site visits, and progress reports.
3. After splitting the competitive and formula funding cycles the RFP had to be updated to include information on how to handle applicants or programs who applied under other funding streams (Competitive or National Direct) and also wanted to be considered for formula funding in case they were not approved by the Corporation.

- a. If a competitive applicant, in the same grant year, received support from the full Montana Commission on Community Service to move forward in the funding process and their application was sent to the Corporation to be reviewed at the competitive level (for the first time) they will not submit an application in order to be considered for formula funding.
- b. If a competitive applicant was not approved by the full commission for funding and they wish to apply for formula funds they must go through the entire formula funding process.

- c. If a Montana program applies for National Direct funding and they wish to be considered for formula funding in case they are not approved at the national level they must go through the entire formula funding process.
 - d. The Grant Review Workgroup will decide on multiple funding scenarios to recommend to the full commission as funding decisions will not be made at the national level until after the formula funding process has completed. The Grant Review Workgroup will agree upon different funding recommendations for the full commission based on what happens at the national level.
4. Corporation for National and Community Service (CNCS)
Application Instructions are the same for Competitive and Formula. Please review the application instructions before reading and scoring the applications. The score sheet is based on the application instructions with the addition of a Staff Assessment section.

ii. Review Packet (FedEx) – May 13

- 1. Pushed back from the original May 2nd date to allow staff enough time to review, score, and complete a Staff Assessment for every application
- 2. Binders will include:
 - a. RFP – Application Instructions – Terms and Acronyms
 - b. Letter of Intent – Cover Letter – Staff Assessment
 - c. Application – Score Sheet
 - d. Conflict of Interest – Scoring Instructions – Score Sheet

iii. In Person Interview – May 25-26

- 1. Staff Recommendations
 - a. Given after the Grant Review Workgroup has come to a consensus score on all applications but before a funding recommendation for the full commission has been decided.

iv. Full Commission Meeting- June 10

- 1. Reminder this will be a video conference and the Grant Review Workgroups recommendations will be sent out a week prior.

V. Application Instructions (Rebecca Steele)

- a. Again: Please review the application instructions before reading and scoring the applications, as the score sheet is based on the application instructions.
- b. National Service Terms and Acronyms

- i. Provided as a resource as you begin reading the RFP, Application Instructions, and Applications. Additionally we (OCS) are always here to answer questions you may have about the process.

VI. Funding Priorities for Formula (Tony Dean)

a. Conditional Ranking based on Competitive Funding Notice

- i. The corporation has informed us that we won't know the results of the competitive awards until the first part of July. What this means is that when you meet May 25-26 you won't know whether or not Campus Corps, Conservation Corps, or YACS have received an award or not.
- ii. How we have handled this in the past is by incorporating into our funding recommendations conditional clauses. The clause is to reinforce that the formula funding is not guaranteed and is dependent upon those applications that we have submitted to competitive receive competitive funding. Also, If a program does not receive competitive funding you are not required to fund them using formula.
- iii. I would like to reiterate that at this point it's easy to want to try and forecast future funding. I would just like to say that there are a lot of uncertainties and unknowns right now making it very difficult to draw any conclusions.

b. Supplemental Formula Funding

- i. This is formula funding that other state commissions do not use and gets put in a pool to be used by other Commissions.
- ii. This is on-time funding meaning that there is less guarantee year-to year that a program will be received funding.
- iii. Depending on the number of applications and available funding this might be something that you will want to consider.

VII. Score Sheet (Jim Auer)

a. Scoring Method 0-2

- i. Scoring should be a black and white process either an expectation is not met, met, or met with proven past success.
- ii. Applications should be viewed from the perspective of a person with no previous knowledge of the applicant.
- iii. Under this scoring method a score of 50 is perfectly average, neither good nor bad. An average applicant should receive a score of 50.
- iv. In regard to assessing the "proven experience" of a new applicant, one without previous experience managing an AmeriCorps program, most applicants will have some kind of previous organizational experience working in the area where they propose to utilize AmeriCorps members. This organizational experience should be the basis for scoring a particular question a 2, indicating positive previous experience, as opposed to a one.

- v. Jackie Girard
 - 1. Contributed significantly on the importance of having a thorough and understandable scoring to back up decisions sent to the corporations level
 - 2. Commented on keeping the scoring system simple while reviewing and scoring only what is in the application
- b. Previous Grantee and Staff Assessment
 - i. During this grant cycle staff will be providing input in a more formal matter through the Staff Assessment Sheet. While staff is providing the information it is the job of reviewers to assess the extent to which the expectation is met or unmet.
 - ii. A requirement we have added with the section is the provision of Memorandums of Understanding (MOUs) from outside match providers to the grant this to ensure that partnerships stated are being developed in the planning phase.
 - iii. James Steele
 - 1. Commented on the importance of having MOUs from his previous experience working with grants
 - iv. Further new applicants will be required to submit evidence of past fundraising efforts as evidence of their ability to meet budgeted match stated in the grant proposal.
 - v. The new weighting of the Full Application Score Sheet is – 40% Staff Assessment, 30% Program Design, 15% Organizational Capacity, and 15% Budget Adequacy. The Continuation Score Sheet will be weighted - 40% Staff Assessment, 60% all other sections
- c. Full Application
 - i. This is the longer Score Sheet for new and reCompleting applicants
- d. Continuation
 - i. This is an abbreviated Score Sheet for continuation applicants. Special attention should be paid to changes in these applicants' budgets and their efforts to implement Corporation mandated changes to programs such as the increased requirements for criminal history checks.
 - ii. Adam
 - 1. Asked for clarification on the scoring of changes to the budget for continuation grants
 - iii. Assessing budget changes, including those resulting from CNCS mandates, a programs ability to absorb increased expenses in match should be viewed as a positive. If an applicant increases their budget primarily or wholly through CNCS funds (increasing cost per MSY and decreasing match percent) very strong justification should be provided in

the application. This is an area where grant reviewers should be especially critical of applications.

e. Montana Initiatives and Expectations

- i. These initiatives do not affect final scoring but will be used in the instance of a tie. Meeting Montana state initiatives should be viewed as a positive for the application but not as a necessity in applying to Montana distributed Corporation funds.

VIII. Conflict of Interest

(Sidney Armstrong)

- a. Sidney Armstrong, with a background in grant making foundations, explained the importance of awarding grants, reviewing grants carefully, discussing thoroughly, and avoiding conflict of interests in the process.
- b. What is a conflict of interest?
 - i. A conflict of interest may exist when:
 1. A direct, person, or financial interest of any commissioner or their immediate family competes with the interest of OCS
 2. A Commissioner is also a trustee, officer, or employee of an organization that obtains or seeks fund from OCS
- c. Commissioners are obligated by:
 - i. Fiduciary responsibility (all funds spent in accordance with highest standards)
 - ii. Loyalty to the Governor's Office of Community Service and the Corporation for National and Community Service (in accepting appointment to the commission)
- d. Why is it important to have a conflict of interest policy?
 - i. General mistrust of government by some- (Open government is more important than ever with this current political climate)
 - ii. Integrity of the process
 - iii. Level playing field and Fair Play
 - iv. Need to avoid even the appearance of conflict
- e. Process for Voting
 - i. Commissioner declares conflict
 - ii. Commissioner leave the room during the discussion of application and does not lobby for the applicant in side conversations
 - iii. During voting (in workgroup and full commission), grant application is segregated and voted on separately
 - iv. Commissioner declares abstention from vote
 - v. Abstention is noted in official minutes
- f. Things to remember
 - i. Keep communication lines open to avoid the appearance of a conflict
 - ii. Conflicts of interest are only with current or potential relationships
 - iii. If you think you have a conflict of interest while reading the applications, please notify the staff

IX. Wrap Up and Questions